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ABSTRACT

Two experiments were conducted in November 1980 and March 1981 to study media effects on the perceived legitimacy of political groups. The first experiment was a pilot study designed specifically to explicate legitimacy by factor analysis. The second experiment was designed to validate the factor analysis performed in the pilot study, to expand the number of independent variables manipulated, and to test specific hypotheses for the factors. The factor analysis of 20 measures in the first experiment yielded four factors: evaluation, legality, viability, and stability. The results of this pilot study partially supported the hypothesis that negative, ridiculing media coverage of a deviant political group could decrease its perceived legitimacy. In the second experiment, 178 business and journalism students responded to measures delineating the four factors that resulted from the first experiment. The results of this second experiment found support among all four factors for the hypothesis that negative, ridiculing media treatments could cause a deviant political party to be perceived as less legitimate. But interactions between media treatment and political party on three of the four factors emphasized the need for studying legitimacy as four separate dimensions--evaluation, legality, viability, and stability. (RL)

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MEDIA EFFECTS ON THE PERCEIVED LEGITIMACY OF DEVIANT POLITICAL GROUPS: TWO EXPERIMENTS

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The rich diversity of opinion expressed in the U.S. media is one point of pride for those who advocate a media system separate from and uncontrolled by the political system. Americans cite freedom of the press and the resulting expression of dissenting opinion as a basic strength of their society. According to the rhetoric, a deviant group has its fair chance to solicit members and to publicize and work toward achieving its goals through the media. The result is supposedly a pluralistic society in which all ideas have a chance to win support and in which all political groups--no matter how removed from the mainstream of political thought--are treated seriously and fairly by the media.

This argument, although deeply ingrained within American democratic ideology, is not accepted by everyone. Critics say that the diversity of opinion is a farce: That most of the so-called deviant views expressed in the mass media are really part of the underlying consensus supporting the political system. That the seemingly diverse ideas presented are really only superficial and misleading. That views which do not somehow support the consensus are brought into ideological line by ridiculing them as "irrelevant eccentricities which serious and reasonable people may dismiss as of no consequence." (Miliband, 1969:238) Freedom of expression, says Miliband, means the freedom to express opinions which are "helpful to the prevailing system of power and privilege."

In his recent study of the mass media and a 1960s left-wing movement, Students for a Democratic Society, Gitlin (1980) cites examples of how the mass media used media "frames" to identify the SDS as contrary to the mainstream political system's ideology. Frames are "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely

organize discourse, whether verbal or visual." (Gitlin, 1980:7) For example, the trivialization frame was used to make light of the SDS members' language, dress, age, style, and goals. The marginalization frame showed the demonstrators as deviant or unrepresentative. Other frames emphasized the violence in the SDS demonstrations and placed delegitimizing quotation marks around terms like "peace march."

To treat the SDS as a legitimate deviant group with a democratic right to freedom of expression would have required that the media take the group seriously at face value. What the media did instead, says Gitlin, was to distort the SDS movement "in such a way as to seem not so much dangerous as incoherent, senseless, and . . . absurd." (Gitlin, 1980:67)

It is important to realize that the critics of the U.S. media system acknowledge the presence of the deviant views within the media. It is the treatment of the deviant groups that is criticized. And it is the treatment of the deviant groups that renders them impotent.

It is not exactly that the media lose sight of their objectivity and present the deviant group in a negative light; it is rather that the media present the deviant group as holding ridiculous and eccentric views that no reasonable person would accept.

It is the legitimacy of the deviant group that is questioned. The critical hypothesis is that the U.S. media are instruments which maintain the system's ideology by delegitimizing deviant groups. Deviant groups are treated as having no legitimate right to be taken seriously.

It was an investigation of this hypothesis that prompted these two experiments. But first it is necessary to define the two concepts which are central to the studies--legitimacy and deviance.

LEGITIMACY

Researchers agree that the mass media can affect the perceived legitimacy of a deviant political group. Some say that deviant opinions are controlled by the media presenting them as eccentric and ridiculous, while others assert that any media presentation is better than no media presentation. But it is the legitimacy of the group that is at stake, and legitimacy is a rather ambiguous concept.

Kelman (1976) says that legitimacy is truly a social psychological concept because it bridges the gap between the individual and social system levels of analysis; it refers to both levels simultaneously. But what is legitimacy?

The literature. A search of the recent literature revealed that legitimacy has been measured in a wide variety of ways by many researchers, and that almost no two researchers use the same methods.

Legitimacy of a government, say Dennis and Chaffee (1978), "involves one's orientations toward the government in general." They measure legitimacy as both the global level of confidence and as a particularistic level of approval (including strength and decisiveness, being friendly and pleasant, capacity for effective leadership, ability to inspire confidence, and making positions clear on the issues).

Kelman (1976:304-310) defines legitimacy as the "perceived rightfulness of the power held and exercised by authorities." He emphasizes that political authorities are perceived as legitimate if they (1) are seen as having the right to exert power and to make demands; (2) receive their right to govern from some kind of external reference system, such as the U.S. constitution; and (3) proceed in a

routine fashion. This routine functioning was particularly important to Kelman's study of legitimacy in the Watergate burglary: "By proceeding in routine fashion--processing papers, exchanging memos, diligently carrying out their assigned tasks--the different units mutually reinforce each other in the view that what is going on must be perfectly normal, correct, and legitimate."

In their study of media agendas and the U.S. Supreme Court's decision on abortions, Pollock, Robinson, and Murray coded a newspaper article as legitimizing if its content generally presented the court positions as "legal, competent, cooperative, stable, peaceful, progressive, nonexploitive and/or moral." (Pollock et al., 1978:545) Kelman (1976:306), however, found in his Watergate study that moral principles were inoperative. The fact that the burglary was ordered by someone who had legitimately been given the right to exert power was an automatic justification for the act. "A different kind of morality, linked to the duty to obey superior order, tends to take over."

O'Neill (1977:351) defines legitimization as a "communicative task addressed to the mobilization of members' commitment to the goals and institutionalized allocations of resources that translate social goals into daily conveniences, rewards, and punishments." But Weber (1947:130) says that legitimacy will be ascribed to a group by (1) tradition; (2) affectual attitudes, especially emotional; (3) rational beliefs in its absolute value to society; and (4) by its having been established in a legal manner. Legality is the usual basis for legitimacy in modern society, says Weber, while Moreno (1974:94) says that a political system based on a "widespread emotional commitment" will be more stable.

This wide variety of ways in which legitimacy has been measured is a problem for the researcher who wants to use the concept. (In the first experiment, I used a factor analysis of the various definitions in order to search for dimensions of legitimacy. A correlation anasysis was used in the second experiment to validate the original factor analysis. More about this later.)

There is a second, equally important problem with using legitimacy as a research concept: Legitimacy is both relative and dynamic. A group such as a political party or an institution such as the presidency is evaluated as legitimate both by individuals and by social systems. For example, a political party may be judged as legitimate by one individual or social system and as not legitimate by another, or two parties may be evaluated in comparison to each other. Legitimacy, to adopt a common phrase, is in the eye of the beholder. Gitlin (1980:196) illustrates this relativity in his description of how violence came to be regarded differently by the SDS and by the mainstream of society:

> The media transmitted images of the turn toward revolutionism as they transmitted images of one of its central rationales: the growing brutality of the police. Together, these images helped render the street-fighting style legitimate within the movement as they helped render it anathema for the audience outside.

Gitlin also discusses the dynamics of legitimacy. As the Vietnam War became less popular and less legitimate, he says, the antiwar activity of the SDS and other groups became more respectable and more legitimate. A person's perception of the legitimacy of a group can change as his interpretations of the situation and of the group change.

This dynamic nature of legitimacy has special implications for the study of how the mass media affect the perception of legitimacy. If perceptions of legitimacy can change, then it follows that the attitudinal bias or even the number of articles that appear about a deviant group in the mass media can change how that group is perceived.

Hypothesized effects. The mass media are supposed to affect the perceived legitimacy of a group in a number of ways. First, the very structure of newsgathering routines contributes to what Gitlin calls the undermining of the "efforts movements may make to present a general, coherent political opposition." The overall picture presented to the reader is one of a movement making single grievances with which a system can deal without altering its fundamental social relations.

Second, the media decide which events are legitimate news stories and which are not. During the 1970s the moderates of the environmental movement were deemed newsworthy and their activities were reported by the media. The radical wings of the environmental movement were not treated as legitimate, however, and they were ignored by the media. According to Gitlin, "the more closely the concerns and values of social movements coincide with the concerns and values of elites in politics and in the media, the more likely they are to become incorporated in the prevailing news frames." The media, he contends, divide political movements into legitimate sources and illegitimate "sideshows" which emphasize the fragmentation of the movements.

Third, the media transmit statements from legitimate sources that affect how a deviant group is perceived. As Kelman (1976:305) puts it, when a public official is quoted as saying that students are "hoodlums" or that drug users are "vermin," the official is legitimizing violence

against these groups. Media reports of government-enforced affirmative action programs, however, help legitimize groups that are working toward equal opportunity for all segments of society.

Finally, there is the effect which was tested and which is described in this paper. Critics of the U.S. media say that the media help maintain the political system's ideology by ridiculing deviant groups and by making them appear eccentric and not to be taken seriously. This ridiculing treatment, say the critics, delegitimizes the deviant group and renders it impotent.

Factors affecting legitimacy. Also to be considered in any study of legitimacy are the the factors which affect it. The first factor is the entity (whether a group or individual) being judged as legitimate or not legitimate. These properties of the entity should be evaluated: (a) The type of entity, such as a political party, government institution, special interest group, or an individual. (b) The entity's position in the political spectrum, such as a right- or left-wing political party. (c) How deviant the entity is perceived as being. (d) The entity's base rate of legitimacy (a legitimacy rating measured prior to experimental manipulation).

The second factor affecting legitimacy is the entity doing the judging. These properties are important: (a) The type of entity doing the judging, such as an individual or a group. (b) The judge's position on the political spectrum, such as right- or left-wing. (c) The judge's level of support for the political party or institution being judged prior to experimental manipulation. (d) The judge's level of media use, especially media use pertaining to the group being judged.

Finally, the media must also be considered as affecting legitimacy. These characteristics may be influential: (a) The type of medium, such as newspaper, television, magazine, or radio. (b) The type of article the group is mentioned in, such as news, feature, or opinion. (c) The amount of previous coverage about the group. (d) The attitudinal direction of the media coverage, prior to and during experimental manipulation. (e) The amount of time over which the group has been mentioned by the media.

DEVIANCE

Moscovici (1980) equates minorities with deviance. "A minority . . . by definition expresses a deviant judgement, a judgement contrary to the norms respected by the social groups." (Moscovici, 1980:211) He sees deviant views as the stimulus for social change and recognizes that deviant behaviors are "tolerated by certain societies at predetermined times (carnivals, holidays, etc.) and are permitted in other societies in the religious, political and intellectual realm, even if they are attacked and considered undesirable."

Wells (1978:196-197) outlines three ways in which deviance has been defined. The conventional approach for many years was a normative one: that deviant behavior is "conduct that violates social rules or norms, and a deviant [is] then defined as a person who has engaged in such conduct." Behavior is de facto deviant when it is compared to some collectively held social norm outside of the social actor. This definition implies that deviance is bad simply because it is different from the social norm; society determines who or what is deviant.

The labeling perspective challenged this normative definition. Labeling advocates believe that a group becomes deviant when and because someone else calls it deviant, not because of any inherent badness. "Behavior is post facto deviant by its retrospective categorization through an organized social labeling response." The person or group doing the labeling controls whether someone is labeled deviant.

The third definition of deviance is a newer one which depends on the subjective meaning of behavior for its enactors. Behavior is consciously deviant to the extent that a person or group is aware that what he is doing is in some sense wrong or disapproved. The power to categorize a person as deviant lies entirely within that person.

While these three definitions do not describe exactly the same process, they can probably occur simultaneously and in several combinations. For example, a radical left-wing political party can be regarded as deviant by society, by the media, or by government, and also by the individuals within the political party itself. Or the individuals within the party can see themselves as working for the common good and for integration into the mainstream of the political system, while the media regard the party as extremely different from the political mainstream.

The labeling perspective is of great interest to these experiments: how the media can create a deviant group by merely labeling it as such. In his research, Gitlin (1980:32) found that the New York Times changed its approach to the SDS from an early "respectful exposition of SDS's activities and goals" to, by the fall of 1965, a preponderance of "unflattering themes. . . . SDS was now viewed as extremist, deviant, and dangerous."

This kind of switch in attitude is not unusual, says Miliband (1969:224). "Impartiality and objectivity . . . stop at the point where political consensus itself ends--and the more radical the dissent, the less impartial and objective the media." This does not require, however, that all dissent be prevented from publication. In fact, in many instances the very deviance of a group constitutes its news value.

Deviance and legitimacy are probably related in some cases, but, while it may be possible for extreme deviance to lower perceived legitimacy, deviance is not merely the absence of legitimacy. A deviant group can be perceived as being legitimate and as having legitmate programs and objectives. If SDS (deviant from a normative perspective) had been perceived as legitimate by the mass media, then Gitlin would say that its proposals would have been treated as serious and as worthy of consideration.

The theorized effect under study shows how deviance and legitimacy can interact. In the delegitimacy-by-ridicule hypothesis, it is only after the media perceive and label a group as deviant that they work to delegitimize it. Whether the group would be considered deviant by society or by the individual group members is irrelevant. It is the media's perception of the group and their purposive reaction to the deviance that is being tested. This hypothesis assumes that the media react to what they label as extreme deviance by delegitimizing the deviant group in order to lessen its impact.

THE TWO EXPERIMENTS

Two controlled experiments were conducted in November 1980 and March 1981 to study media effects on the legitimacy of political groups. The

first experiment was a pilot study designed specifically to explicate legitimacy by factor analysis. These questions were considered: What are legitimacy's dimensions? How do the many conceptual and operational definitions used by previous researchers relate to one another? Do the different dimensions of legitimacy react in different ways to experimental manipulation? Although a hypothesis concerning legitimacy in general was tested, such a test is theoretically weak since there were not specific hypotheses for the specific dimensions of legitimacy.

The second experiment was designed to validate the factor analysis performed in the pilot study, to expand the number of independent variables manipulated, and to test specific hypotheses for the factors.

THE PILOT STUDY

Methodology: The major hypothesis under consideration was that a deviant group will be perceived as being less legitimate if the media ridicule it and treat it as eccentric (negatively) than if the media treat it seriously and fairly (positively).

The subjects were 82 University of Wisconsin-Madison journalism students. A right-wing splinter political party (the Unity Freedom party) was fabricated--right-wing so as to truly represent a deviant group to the primarily liberal college students. A real political party was not used in order to control variance caused by sources outside of the experiment.

The questionnaire instructions explained that all political parties were being tested, but that each subject was asked to evaluate only one party. The name Unity Freedom was hand-written on the questionnaire to reinforce this.

There were two treatment conditions in the experiment: a negative, ridiculing newspaper article and a positive, serious newspaper article. A control group filled out the questionnaire without reading an article. The negative and positive articles were faked syndicated opinion articles that the subjects were told had been clipped from one of several newspapers that carried the article a few days before the 1980 presidential election. (The articles were set in an appropriate newspaper typeface and looked like real newspaper clippings.) Subjects were also told that the article they read had been picked at random from among all available articles which discussed the Unity Freedom party. The articles were represented as being syndicated columns to control for variance associated with the credibility or legitimacy of a specific newspaper.

Both articles discussed how the existence of splinter political parties might affect the U.S. two-party system, and the Unity Freedom Party was presented about half-way through the articles as an example of a splinter party. The same party platform was discussed in both articles, although the language used to describe the programs varied, as did the headlines: The positive article was headed "Opportunities for the 2-party system," while the negative article was called "Dangers for the 2-party system."

In the control condition, the subjects merely received the questionnaire--the same questionnaire that the two media conditions filled out. The instructions were neutral; they reiterated that several

political parties were being studied, and that this group of subjects was being asked only about the Unity Freedom Party--one of several parties on the 1980 presidential ballot in various states. The control subjects may have inferred from this that the party was a splinter political party and that it wasn't well-known, but they received no such direct information.

The two articles and the questionnaire instructions were pretested on a seven-point bipolar scale to determine how the subjects perceived the writer's stance toward the Unity Freedom Party. The questionnaire instructions were found to be neutral, with the two articles equidistant from the instructions and on either side of the positive-negative scale.

Legitimacy was measured in 20 ways, consistent with the various conceptual definitions previously discussed: (1) right to exercise power; (2) use of an external reference system or outside standards; (3) routine character of activities; (4) number of members mobilized; (5) ability to reach goals; (6) financial resources; (7) similarity to traditional groups; (8) how well subjects liked the group; (9) value to the social system, helping or hurting the U.S.; (10) observance of laws; (11) right to exist; (12) confidence they will do the right thing; (13) subject's agreement with the goals; (14) degree of organization; (15) competence; (16) cooperation with traditional groups; (17) stability; (18) peaceful or violent nature; (19) fairness/exploitation; and (20) morality.

The 20 conceptual definitions were represented by statements and five-point Likert scales of agreement-disagreement. Positive and negative direction of the measures was randomly varied.

A factor analysis (varimax rotation) was performed on the 20 measures and the resulting factor scores were used as the dependent variables. The hypothesis was tested with a planned comparison.

Results: The factor analysis of the 20 measures yielded four factors: (1) Evaluation--how well subjects liked the party, subject's agreement with the party's goals, confidence it will do the right thing, value to the social system, ability to reach goals, similarity to traditional parties, competence, and morality. (2) Legality--right to exist, external reference system/standards, peaceful or violent nature, observance of laws, right to exercize power, and number of members (negative loading). (3) Viability--financial resources, degree of organization, external reference system/standards, and fairness/exploitation (negative loading). (4) Stability--stability, fairness/exploitation, routine character of activities, cooperation with traditional groups, and observance of laws. (See table 1.)

Variance accounted for by the factors was: (1) 25.8%, (2) 14.9%, (3) 9.7%, and (4) 6.5%. The total variance accounted for was 57.0%.

Table 2 shows the mean responses for the 20 legitimacy variables by factor. In factor 1, all variables except "morality" showed a chi square with a probability of less than .05. Two of the variables in factor 2 (observance of laws and external reference system/standards), one in factor 3 (external reference system/standards), and two in factor 4 (observance of laws and routine character of activities) were significant beyond the .05 level.

The hypothesis of interest was tested using the four factors as dependent variables (table 3). A second planned comparison compared the control condition with the combined media conditions. Both planned

comparisons yielded significant results ($p<.01$) on just the evaluation factor.

The hypothesis of interest was confirmed only by the evaluation factor. (See figure 1.) If you got the negative, ridiculing message, you were more likely to rate the political party low on the evaluation factor.

Comparing the control group to the combined media groups (figure 2) suggests that getting the message may have decreased the rating on the evaluation factor. Subjects who read either the positive or negative articles rated the Unity Freedom Party as less legitimate on the evaluation factor than did the control subjects.

Analysis: The results of the pilot study partially support the hypothesis that negative, ridiculing media coverage of a deviant political group can decrease its legitimacy. Figure 1 clearly shows that the negative, ridiculing newspaper article caused subjects to rate the Unity Freedom Party as less legitimate on the evaluation factor. This was not the case, however, for the other factors.

Figure 2 shows a significant decrease in evaluative legitimacy among the media treatment subjects as compared to the control subjects.

There are at least two ways in which these findings can be interpreted. First, the way in which the political party is defined as deviant will make a difference. The critical hypothesis clearly calls for a labeling definition: The mass media label a group as being deviant, which is often why the group is seen as newsworthy. If the media label a group as deviant and try to delegitimize it with ridiculing coverage, then the reader is likely to get a negative view of the group, hence the low score on the evaluation factor. If the media

label a group as both deviant and legitimate, however, then the reader's reaction is bound to be very different, yielding a higher evaluation score.

A labeling definition of deviance clearly cannot account for the control group's results. It is possible that a normative process defined deviance for the control group, which had no concrete information on which to evaluate whether the Unity Freedom Party deviated from the norms. The opposite was true for the media subjects. Before reading the newspaper article, the media (and control) subjects might have guessed that the Unity Freedom Party was deviant, but they had no firm evidence of this. After reading the article (either positive or negative), however, the media subjects did have evidence of the normative deviance. Getting information about the nature and extent of the deviance may have made the subjects rate the party lower on the evaluation factor.

This seems intuitively impossible. How could subjects who have no information about a political party other than its name give it any kind of evaluative rating? One possible explanation comes from Zajonc's (1980) article, "Feeling and thinking: Preference need no interferences."

Zajonc contends that affect occurs before cognition--the opposite of the traditional view of attitude formation, in which affect is considered to be post-cognitive. He also contends that a person needs neither a lot of information nor a lot of thought to form an attitude--and perhaps he doesn't need any thought at all.

Preferences, says Zajonc, are not formed simply by "cognitive representations that have some affect attached to them." Instead there is a "gross, vague, and global" class of features called "preferenda"

which combine easier with affect. These gross features allow people to have affective reactions very soon after encountering the stimulus. For example, while brightness, hue, and saturation account for almost all variance in color preference, these abstract qualities could not be reported by a subject judging color preferences--even though they affect his preference. What are the preferenda that influence affective reactions to political parties? They have yet to be established. One possibility is the name of the group and any connotative meanings the individual attaches to the word elements making up the name. An initial awareness of a party's name could influence the affective reaction to the group even if no information about the group's goals or activities is available.

Zajonc's hypothesis can be applied to this experiment. The variables in the evaluative factor are mostly affective, while the variables in the other three factors seem to be mostly cognitive.

If we accept Zajonc's contention that affect precedes cognition, then the first part of legitimacy would logically be evaluation--a kind of legitimacy anchor dimension. The remaining three dimensions would follow when information became available which allowed cognition. This could explain how the control subjects were able to form a strong evaluation of the political party even though all they knew about it was its name and that it appeared on the 1980 presidential ballot.

Even the media-condition subjects had very little concrete information about the variables in the three cognitive factors. Consistent with the overall editorial coverage of minor political parties, the experimental opinion articles did not include much background information about the party. The subjects had to infer many of the responses to the cognitive measures, undoubtedly accounting for

the findings of basically no effect in the legality, viability, and stability factors.

EXPERIMENT TWO

One major purpose of the second experiment was to validate the factor analysis. With this in mind, an explication of the four factors as four separate dependent variables was performed and separate hypotheses were developed for the factors. Four measures were developed for each factor.

Evaluation: This dimension is largely affective: An evaluation score tells us more about the subject than about the deviant group. The subject is asked to tell us how he feels about the deviant group--liking, agreeing with, confidence in, estimation of social value. If Zajonc is right, then evaluation is the initial gut reaction of the person to the deviant group. Such a reaction would not have to be based on much information--perhaps only the group's name or the notion that the group is deviant would be enough. And a gut reaction certainly doesn't have to be logical or rational.

These are the conceptual and operational definitions for the evaluation items: (Operational definitions are in quotes. Positive and negative direction of operational definitions was varied systematically, two of each direction per factor. Five-point Likert scales of agreement-disagreement were used.) (1) The degree to which the subject likes the entity. "I like the Socialist World Party." (Or the Unity Freedom Party, or the Christian Polity Party, or the Workers Union

Party.) (2) The degree to which the subject agrees with the entity's goals. "I disagree with the Socialist World Party's goals." (3) The subject's confidence that the entity will do the right thing. "I'm confident that the Socialist World Party will do the right thing." (4) Perceived value of the entity to society. "The Socialist World Party is of no value to the United States."

Legality: This dimension reflects the entity's position within the political system and to some extent is a measure of how the entity obeys political norms. Legality probably depends on judgments at two points in time. Time one: How the entity assumed power. Was it lawful and socially approved? Was it by violence and revolution? Was trickery or deception suspected, such as in a contested election? Time two: Once power is assumed, does the group work within the traditional legal system? If there are vast legal reforms. are they accepted socially? A low score at either point in time could reduce the perceived legality of an entity

In the case of deviant political parties, power generally has not been achieved, so the measures concentrate on time one. The measures must determine how the process of trying to achieve power is perceived. Does the entity uphold the system's established codes and values? Does the entity have a right to exist, even if it is working to change the system?

Conceptual and operational definitions: (1) Observance of U.S. laws. "The Socialist World Party works within the law." (2) Respect for the U.S. political system. "The Socialist World Party thinks the U.S. political system is a farce." (3) Right to exist. "The Socialist World Party doesn't have a right to exist." (4) Right to assume power.

"The Socialist World Party has a right to gain elected control of the presidency and of Congress."

Viability: This dimension touches on whether the entity has the technical capabilities necessary for achieving its goals. A highly viable entity would have good financial backing, political and communication skills, an efficient organization, and the ability to find political allies among diverse groups. There is a suggestion of manipulation in viability: that the entity could manipulate its environment to get what it wants.

Conceptual and operational definitions: (1) Financial support. "The Socialist World Party has all the money it needs." (2) Political and communication skills. "The Socialist World Party doesn't have the skills necessary to win an election." (3) Organization and efficiency. "The Socialist World Party is highly organized and efficient." (4) Political allies outside of membership. "The Socialist World Party is incapable of forming alliances with other political groups."

Stability: This dimension contains three elements: One, the entity's ability to endure over time; two, the sameness of the entity's policies over time, consistency; and three, the degree to which the entity's policies are directed toward a single goal. A highly stable political party would be one which had existed for a long time and which probably would exist for a long time in the future, which had not radically changed its policies over the years, and which was funneling all of its resources in one direction.

Conceptual and operational definitions: (1) The length of time the entity has already existed. "The Socialist World Party probably wasn't on any state's ballot in the 1976 election." (2) The probability of its existence in the future. "The Socialist World Party will

probably be on the 1984 presidential ballot." (4) Sameness of the policies over time, consistency. "The Socialist World Party's goals keep changing." (4) Unidirectional policies. "All of the Socialist World Party's goals are probably related as parts of an overall game plan."

Methodology: Five hypotheses were tested in the second experiment: (1) The more negative and ridiculing the media treatment of a deviant group, the lower the group's score will be on the evaluation dimension. (2) There will be an interaction between media treatment and the political party's position in the political spectrum on the legality dimension. The more negative and ridiculing the media treatment of a right-wing deviant group, the more legal it will be perceived as being. The more negative and ridiculing the media treatment of a left-wing deviant group, the less legal it will be perceived as being. (3) The more information transmitted about a deviant group, the more viable it will be perceived as being. (4) Right-wing groups are in general perceived as being more stable than left-wing groups. (5) The more information transmitted about a deviant group, the more stable it will be perceived as being.

The subjects were 178 college students: 79 business and journalism students from Marquette University, 73 journalism students from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 14 agricultural journalism students from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and 12 reporting students from Madison Area Technical College. An effort was made not only to increase the number of subjects in comparison to the pilot study, but also to find subjects who were more heterogeneous, i.e., less uniformly liberal.

The independent variables included media treatment (positive, serious and negative, ridiculing newspaper articles), party position within the political spectrum (right- and left-wing parties), and length of the articles (short and long versions).

Four political parties were fabricated (Unity Freedom, Christian Polity, Socialist World, and Worker's Union), two right-wing and two left-wing, two positive and two negative. The design involved repeated measures, so that all subjects evaluated all four political parties. There were two questionnaire forms over which the article lengths were varied. Subjects saw one of these two combinations.

Questionnaire #1: (1) Right-wing, positive, short. (2) Right-wing, negative, long. (3) Left-wing, positive, long. (4) Left-wing, negative, short.

Questionnaire #2: (1) Right-wing, positive, long. (2) Right-wing, negative, short. (3) Left-wing, positive, short. (4) Left-wing, negative, long.

The articles were represented as news stories clipped from various newspapers prior to the 1980 presidential election. The articles were written in inverted pyramid style, set in type (different styles and sizes for each articles), and photocopied so that they looked as it they had been cut from newspapers and duplicated. The inverted pyramid style permitted varying the article lengths by merely cutting off the last half of the articles. Word counts of the four articles within the short and long versions were approximately the same.

The positive and negative media treatments were achieved by careful selection of <u>what</u> to include in the article. Unlike the opinion articles in the pilot study, the news articles included no editorializing. The articles were "objective" in style, but

"subjective" in content. For example, the left-wing Socialist World Party was described as having just won a position on the New York state presidential ballot due to the help of women's groups in that state. (Because the SWP was in favor of mandatory day care facilities.) The left-wing Workers Union Party was depicted as being involved in a union-management confrontation at a Westinghouse plant where the workers were on strike. Police were called in to avert a riot.

This is actually an extension and refinement of the "positive" and "negative" labels. The "positive" article was positive because it took the deviant political party seriously and treated it as a fair contender for an elected position. But it also showed the deviant group doing things that the centrist parties do--getting on the ballot. The "negative" article showed the Workers Union Party as irresponsible and eccentric. The candidate shouted about "capitalist slaves and stooges" as he called to those workers crossing the picket line, something it is difficult to picture a centrist candidate doing.

The headlines also suggest the positive and negative treatments. The right-wing, positive condition was headed "Unity Freedom Party candidate rides crest of 'moral' movement." Right-wing, negative: "Christians: Keep foreigners away from U.S. children." Left-wing, positive: "NOW helps Socialists get on the New York ballot." Left-wing, negative: "Police stop riot at Westinghouse."

The dependent variable measures from each factor were systematically distributed. The position of the articles and accompanying dependent variable pages was systematically varied among the questionnaires. Each subject read an article, filled out its dependent variable page, read another article, and filled out its

page, etc. Within any subject group (college classes), about half of the subjects filled out each of the two questionnaire forms.

Factor scales were created by summing the mean responses for each of the four factor measures. A Pearson correlation matrix was produced as a validation of the pilot study factor analysis.

Analysis of variance for repeated measures was performed using the factor scales for each political party as dependent variables.

Results: Table 4 shows the average inter-item correlations between and within the four factors. In every instance, the correlation of a factor with itself is larger than the correlations between factors. The factors are not entirely independent of each other, but they do seem to represent different dimensions of legitimacy.

The factor scores by left- and right-wing parties and by media treatment are shown in Table 5. Figures 3 to 6 illustrate these relationships.

Analysis of variance of the evaluation factor found a weak main effect of party (left- or right-wing), $p<.05$. This could be an artifact of the experimental articles and not generalizable to other media situations. There was, however, a strong main effect ($p<.001$) of media treatment and an interaction between party and treatment.

Both the legality and viability factors showed strong main effects ($p<.001$) of treatment and interactions between party and treatment.

The stability factor showed strong main effects of both party and treatment ($p<.001$).

There was no main effect of article length or any interactions of length with either party or treatment.

Here's how the five hypotheses fared:

(1) The more negative and ridiculing the media treatment of a deviant group, the lower the group's score will be on the evaluation dimension. Confirmed.

(2) There will be an interaction between media treatment and the political party's position in the political spectrum in the legality dimension. Confirmed, but the finding was the opposite of the prediction: Right-wing groups were actually seen as less legal under the negative media treatment than were left-wing groups, even though the reverse was true under the positive treatment.

(3) The more information transmitted about a deviant group, the more viable it will be perceived as being. Disconfirmed. Article length had no effect on viability. (Data not shown.)

(4) Right-wing groups are in general perceived as being more stable than left-wing groups. Disconfirmed. In fact, the evaluation and stability dimensions showed significant main effects for party, but in the opposite direction of prediction: Left-wing groups got higher scores on these factors than did right-wing groups.

(5) The more information transmitted about a deviant group, the more stable it will be perceived as being. Disconfirmed. Article length had no effect on viability. (Data not shown.)

Although not predicted, there were also interactions between party and treatment on both the evaluation and viability factors, as well as main effects of treatment on legality, viability, and stability, and a main effect of party on evaluation. For all factors but stability, the negative media treatment seemed to affect the right-wing group more than it affected the left-wing party.

Analysis: This second experiment found support among all four factors for the hypothesis that negative, ridiculing media treatments can cause a deviant political party to be perceived as less legitimate. But interactions between media treatment and political party on three of the four factors emphasize the need for studying legitimacy as four separate dimensions--evaluation, legality, viability, and stability.

Of the four dimensions, stability seems to be the most different. Not only was there no interaction on the stability dimension between party and treatment, but there was also a strong main effect of party. The lack of any hypothesized effect of length on either stability or viability may be due to inadequate experimental manipulation in this study. The difference of a few paragraphs in one newspaper article may not be a strong enough variation to cause a change in stability or viability. In addition, stability must be affected by time, so we may only see an effect due to the amount of information transmitted by the media over time.

In addition, although it was not hypothesized, there appears to be an effect of factor on the responses: The evaluation and viability scores are almost all below the mean (or neutral) position, while the legality and stability scores are almost all above the neutral point. While this could be an artifact of this particular experiment, there is some support for such a difference in some of Moscovici's work with minority influence.

In his study of minorities over the last several years, Moscovici has isolated several factors which affect whether a minority will influence the majority. He has repeatedly placed the most emphasis on consistency--how consistent are the minority's behaviors and goals? Does everyone who speaks for the minority opinion say basically the same

thing or is there dissension within the minority group? Does the minority express the same opinions over time? (Moscovici and Faucheux, 1972:183)

Another factor outlined by Moscovici is normalization--the tendency for a person to establish consensus between what he observes and what he believes, a kind of internal consistency. Moscovici and Faucheux claim that this normalization process occurs because people have a need for consensus. People see themselves as representative of the average person, and so they interpret their observations as being closer to their personal norms than perhaps the observations really are.

These two factors--consistency and normalization--seem similar to the stability and legality dimensions of legitimacy. Stability clearly involves consistency of goals over time and at one time, while legality is nothing more than a measure of how an entity conforms to the legal norms of a society. Moscovici sees these factors as very important in determining whether a deviant group will influence the majority.

Not accounting for the minority's influence over the majority, says Moscovici, are the degree to which one likes the minority (because "minorities tend to be disliked") and the minority's competence (because "minorities are generally regarded as relatively incompetent"). (Moscovici, 1980:236) Liking, of course, is an integral part of the evaluation factor, and competence is clearly linked to viability. Moscovici's prediction of low scores on liking and competence measures fit exactly with findings of generally lower ratings on these two factors than on legality and stability.

DISCUSSION

It is clearly misleading to talk of legitimacy as if it is a homogeneous variable. Legitimacy, as it has been used in the literature, is actually a number of different dimensions, all of which do not react in the same way to experimental manipulation.

But it is also clearly reasonable to assert that the mass media can affect all four of these dimensions, although apparently in different ways.

In the case of deviant political parties, different mass media treatments can interact with whether the parties are left- or right-wing to result in effects of similar direction but different intensity. In three of the four dimensions, the right-wing party was hurt more by the negative media treatment than was the left-wing party.

But what is so important about the general determination of the legitimacy of a political entity? It seems to me that forming a conception of political entities as legitimate is a first step in the political socialization process. Several researchers (such as Greenstein or Easton and Dennis) have suggested that there are developmental stages of political socialization. In a similar manner, it isn't too difficult to concoct a scenario in which the four dimensions of legitimacy come to play sequentially during a person's life. As a young child, evaluation could be the only part of legitimacy that is meaningful or possible. The child learns to "like" the President, even though the President may be an institution and not a particular person. As the child enters school and learns something of the political system, legality may come into play. The child learns that President Reagan is legitimate because he achieved power in a

recognized legal fashion. When cognitive skills develop and the child learns to judge the resources available to a political entity, he may make judgments of whether an entity is viable. Evaluations of stability, of course, are most likely after the child/young adult has experienced several years as a member of the political system.

These are not proposed as discrete stages; they should instead be thought of as sequential building blocks of an overall conception of legitimacy. And legitimacy--especially the evaluation and legality aspects--is the foundation upon which political socialization takes place.

The role of the mass media in this legitimization process is certainly critical. Just as the role of the mass media in political socialization is increasingly recognized, the role of the media in the legitimization of political entities deserves attention. The experiments cited in this paper show that the media can affect the perceived legitimacy of a poltical entity. What the experiments do not show, however, is whether and to what extent these positive and negative treatments occur in the real world of newspapers and television.

That is the next logical step in the study of legitimacy. A content analysis of real-world media to identify deviant political groups which have been treated in positive or negative ways should be coupled with measures of the four legitimacy factors. Such a real-world replication would extend the generalizability of the results.

If a study of real political parties and real media coverage reveals that the media have actually influenced the perceived legitimacy of deviant political groups, then both reporters and journalism educators will have to re-evaluate the efficacy of their guidelines of objectivity and dispassionate reporting.

Budding journalists are taught to include "just the facts" in their news stories; no personal opinions or judgments are permitted. But media critics and journalists alike have often questioned whether true objectivity is achievable. Is there, after all, a "Golden Mean" (Barber, 1978) in media coverage?

Bias can creep into news in a thousand ways other than blatantly including statements of opinion. For every fact included in an article, a hundred others are excluded, possibly accentuating the differences between centrist groups and deviant groups and "helping" the reader arrive at a particular conclusion. And the words which are chosen and the punctuation symbols used can convey the facts and can accentuate the differences in a way more persuasive than any more obviously purposive communication device.

Barber points out how just being trained to be a reporter will cause a journalist to emphasize the differences between people and to ignore the similarities. "The reporter's raw material is differences--between what was and what is, expectations and events, reputations and realities, normal and exotic--and his artful eye is set to see the moment when the flow of history knocks two differences together." Candidates begin to develop distinctive personalities based on their idiosyncracies. The more eccentric, the more newsworthy.

The common threads among the candidates are overlooked. This is as true of the centrist candidates as it is of the others, of course, but the consequences are far more serious for the presidential candidate of, say my fictitious Workers Union Party than for the Republicans or Democrats. Centrist party candidates tend to be more similar than dissimilar; even in their differences they are often barely distinguishable. But the gulf that separates far left- and far

right-wing political parties from the Democrats and Republicans is mighty indeed. And the bigger the differences, the greater the chance that the deviant political party will be represented as not being a legitimate contender for political power.

The most serious aspect of such bias is its unconscious character. As Arterton (1978) writes, "The assertion that journalists exert an influence over the conduct of presidential campaigning does not imply that they intend such an impact or even that they could prevent the effects if they so desired." Preventing "creeping bias" in news coverage probably would require conscious effort and an understanding of the process of delegitimization.

Until we learn more about the effects--intended or not--of everyday political reporting, we can never be sure that journalists have not contributed to the support of the prevailing political system at the expense of new or different ideas.

Table 1. Major factor loadings (varimax rotated) for experiment 1.

Variables	Factor 1 Evaluation	Factor 2 Legality	Factor 3 Viability	Factor 4 Stability
How subjects like the group	.93	.06	.00	.08
Agree with group's goals	.87	.14	-.07	-.05
Confidence they'll do the right thing	.82	-.03	-.11	-.08
Value to U.S.	.80	.11	.04	.00
Achieve goals	.77	.14	-.07	-.05
Similarity to traditional groups	.72	-.17	-.11	.12
Competence of the group	.52	.25	.33	.22
Morality of the group	.41	.06	-.07	.35
Right to exist	.32	.74	.07	-.17
Reference system, standards	-.15	.69	.44	-.01
Peaceful/violent nature	-.19	.65	-.02	.31
Respect for law	-.19	.63	.25	.40
Right to exercise power	.34	.58	-.25	.15
Number of members mobilized	-.05	-.49	.36	.36
Financial support	.05	-.07	.78	.03
Degree of organization	.06	.23	.75	.11
Fairness or exploitation	.14	.04	-.43	.46
Stability	-.18	-.04	.32	.58
Routine nature of activities	.32	.11	-.05	.44
Cooperation with other groups	.29	.29	.11	.40

Table 2. Mean responses for the 20 measures of legitimacy by factor for experiment 1 (5-point scale, 5 being the most legitimate).

Measure of legitimacy for the Unity Freedom Political Party	Control	Positive media	Negative media
Factor 1. Evaluation.			
Similarity to traditional parties [A]	2.5	1.9	1.5
Confidence they will do the right thing [A]	2.8	1.8	1.6
Morality of the members [D]	3.0	2.7	2.5
How well the respondent likes them [A]	3.0	2.0	1.6
Degree to which they will help U.S. [B]	3.1	2.2	2.0
Degree to which the respondents agree with the party's goals [A]	3.0	1.8	1.5
Probability that they will achieve their goals [A]	2.7	2.1	1.8
How competent the party members are [C]	3.1	3.0	2.5
Factor 2. Legality.			
Number of members in the party	2.4	2.6	2.4
Observance of U.S. laws [C]	3.3	3.5	3.6
Right to exist	4.5	4.1	4.3
Peaceful or violent nature	3.3	3.2	3.8
Observance of outside standards [C]	3.2	3.3	3.6
Right to exert power	3.9	3.6	3.6
Factor 3. Viability.			
Degree of organization	3.0	3.2	3.1
Observance of outside standards [C]	3.2	3.9	3.6
Amount of financial support	2.7	3.0	2.8
How fair the party is	3.0	2.9	2.8
Factor 4. Stability.			
Stability over time	2.8	2.9	3.3
Observance of U.S. laws [C]	3.3	3.5	3.6
How fair the party is	3.0	2.9	2.8
How routine their activities are [C]	3.0	2.9	2.8
Cooperation with other parties	3.2	3.1	2.9

[A] Chi square $p<.001$
[B] Chi square $p<.01$
[C] Chi square $p<.05$
[D] Chi square $p<.1$

Table 3. Mean z-scores for the four factors by treatment conditions. Results of the two planned comparisons (experiment 1).

Factor	Positive media mean z-score	Negative media mean z-score	Planned comparison t value [A]	Combined media mean z-score	Control mean z-score	Planned comparison t value [B]
Evaluation	-.17	-.71	2.74*	-.44	.94	7.85*
Legality	-.21	.28	-1.87	.03	-.07	- .43
Viability	.26	.01	.96	.14	-.29	-1.84
Stability	.10	-.01	.40	.05	-.10	- .64

*$p < .01$

[A] Negative value indicates that the factor was rated higher under the negative media treatment than under the positive media treatment.

[B] Positive value indicates that the factor was rated higher under the control condition than under the combined media conditions.

Figure 1. Means of factor z-scores for positive and negative media conditions (experiment 1).

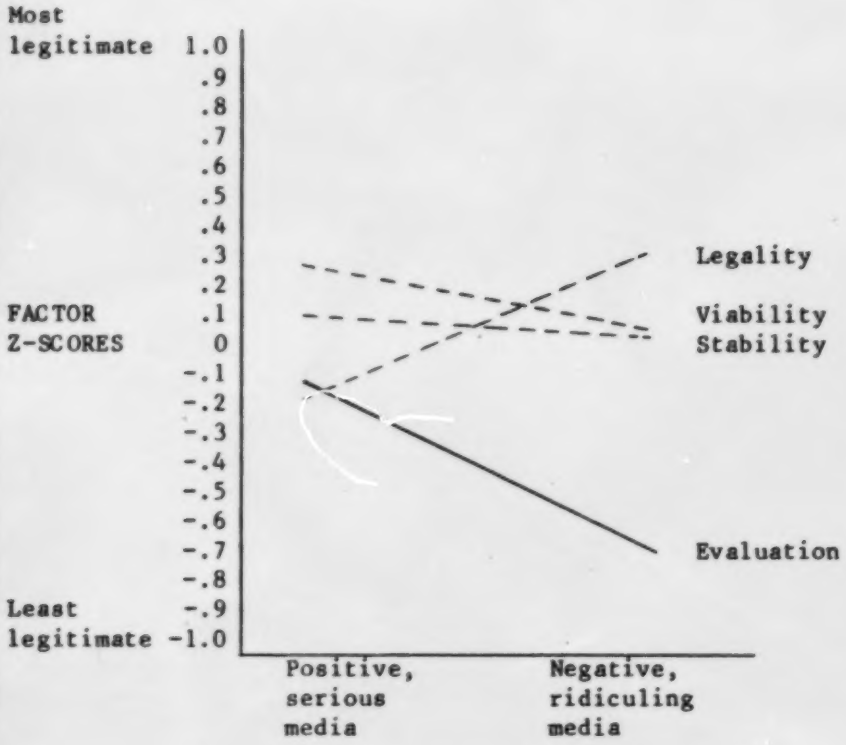

Figure 2. Means of factor z-scores for the control group and for the combined treatment groups (experiment 1).

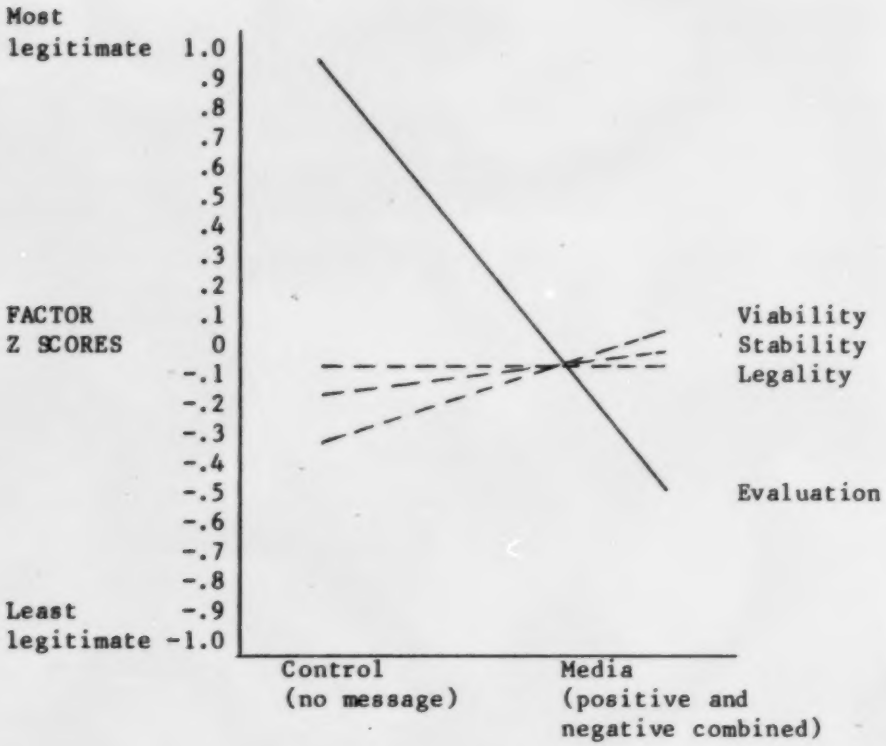

Table 4. Average inter-item correlations between and within factors (experiment 2).

	Evaluation	Legality	Viability	Stability
Evaluation	r=.42	.27	.17	.11
Legality		.31	.16	.16
Viability			.24	.18
Stability				.22

Cells on the diagonal represent within factor correlations. Cells off the diagonal represent correlations between factors.

Table 5. Factor scores (and standard deviations) by party and treatment. Range is 4 to 20, 12=neutral (experiment 2)

	Political Position				
	Left-wing		Right-wing		
	Media treatment		Media treatment		
Factor	+	-	+	-	
Evaluation	11.59 (2.69)	11.05 (2.41)	12.12 (2.61)	9.65 (2.52)	44.41
Legality	13.91 (2.39)	12.98 (2.25)	14.55 (2.27)	12.42 (2.62)	53.86
Viability	11.49 (1.91)	10.90 (1.89)	12.09 (2.05)	10.24 (2.11)	44.72
Stability	13.77 (1.95)	12.50 (2.00)	12.97 (1.68)	11.96 (1.77)	51.20
	50.76	47.43	51.73	44.27	194.19

Combined party scores
Left-wing = 98.19

Right-wing = 96.00

Combined media scores
Positive = 102.49

Negative = 91.70

Figure 3. Evaluation dimension by experimental treatment (experiment 2)

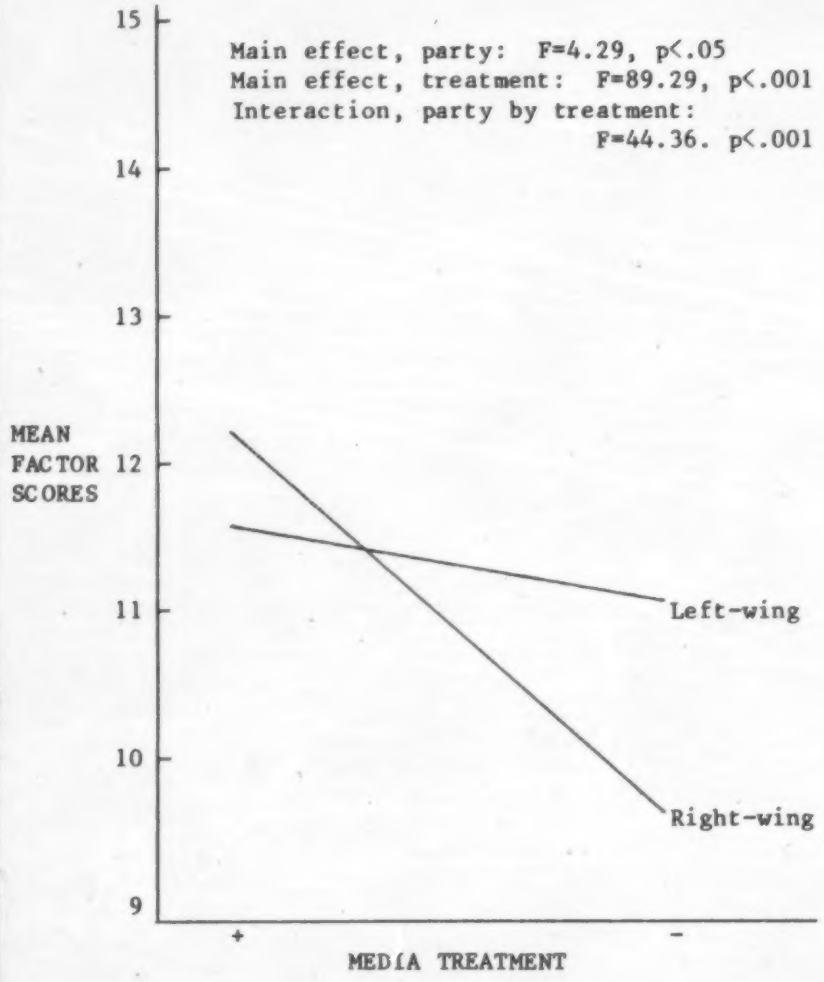

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Figure 4. Legality dimension by experimental treatment (experiment 2)

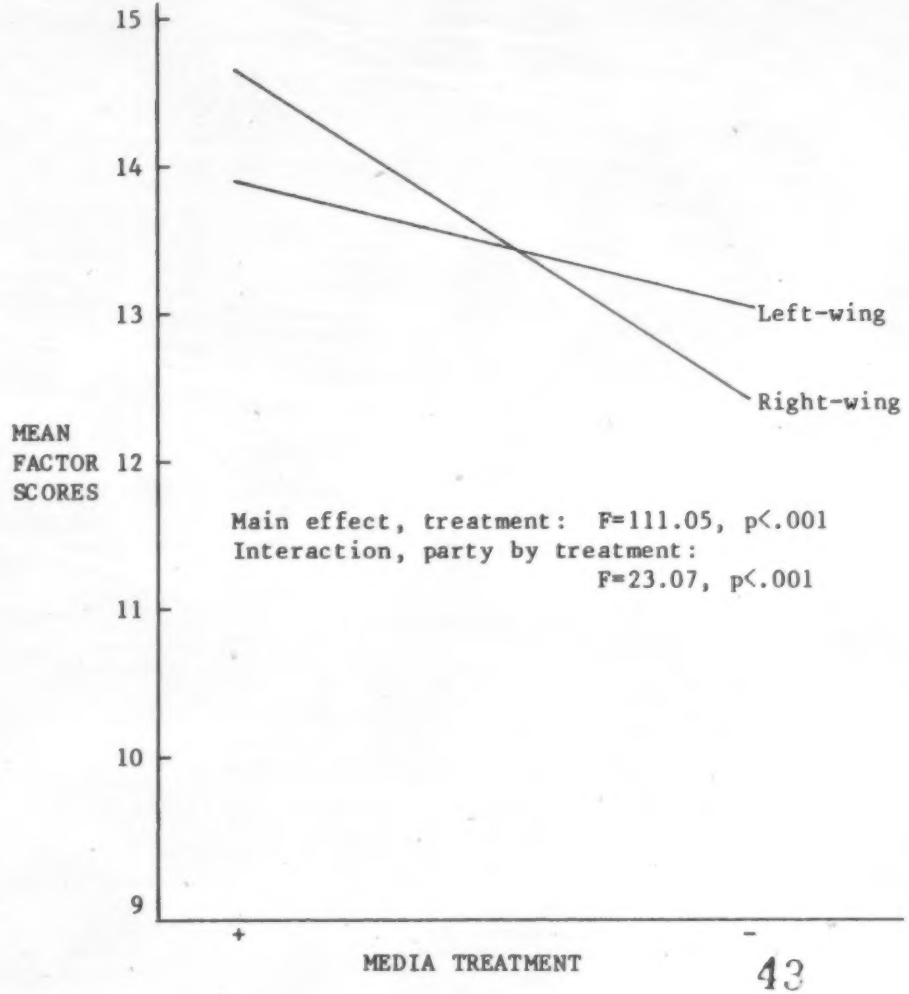

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Figure 5. Viability dimension by experimental treatment (experiment 2)

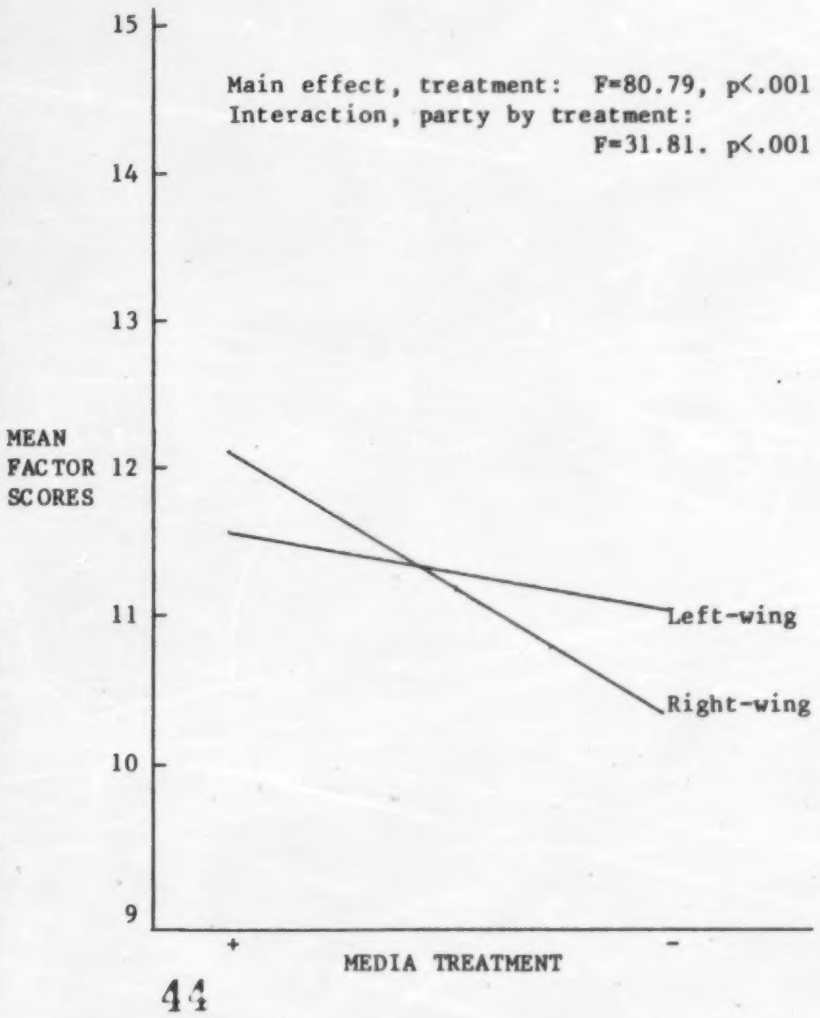
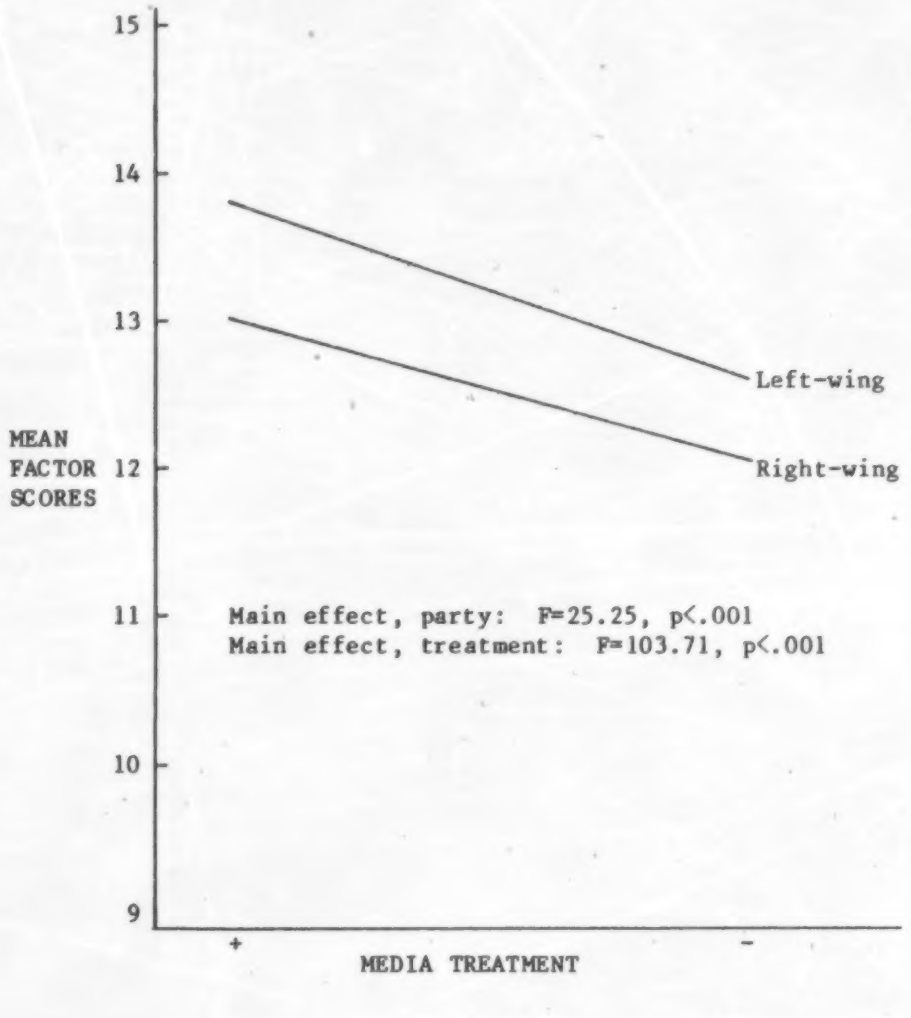


Figure 6. Stability dimension by experimental treatment (experiment 2)



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